

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

July 15, 1986

PRESS RELEASE

TREASURES FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
August 13 - October 5, 1986

Treasures from the National Museum of American Art, on tour throughout the United States for thirteen months, will be on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from August 13 through October 5, 1986. It brings to Cleveland for the first time a representation of works by renowned American artists from the extensive collections of the National Museum of American Art (NMAA), Smithsonian Institution. Organized by the NMAA, the national tour of the exhibition--seventy-three paintings, seven sculptures, and one watercolor, dating from the 1740s through the 1970s--has been made possible by a generous grant from United Technologies Corporation.

The oldest federal art collection in the United States, the NMAA's history dates to 1829 when a Washingtonian named John Varden began a collection he deemed fitting for the nation's capital. In 1841 his collection was absorbed into a new museum of arts and sciences, the National Institute. When the National Institute was disbanded in 1862, its collections were transferred to the recently established Smithsonian Institution. In 1968, the art collection, which had grown especially rich in works by American artists and was known as the National Collection of Fine Arts, was moved into its present home in the Old Patent Office Building. The name, National Museum of American Art, given to the Museum in 1980, more accurately defines its purpose and its collections, which presently consist of more than 32,000 paintings, sculptures, graphics, photographs, and decorative arts encompassing more than 250 years of America's artistic heritage.

(more)

Treasures from the National Museum of American Art presents primarily paintings by some of the nation's foremost painters. Charles Willson Peale's splendid portrait of Mrs. James Smith and Grandson was painted just two months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Gilbert Stuart's "picture of affection" of the aged former president John Adams was commissioned by his son John Quincy Adams; Man with the Cat by Cecilia Beaux, one of several women artists whose work is included, depicts her brother-in-law, a railroad executive, in a white suit with an orange cat in his lap.

Scenes depicting American Indians were popular among 19th-century frontier artists, including Charles Bird King, whose Young Omaha, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees is featured on the cover of the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, and George Catlin, whose Buffalo Bull's Back Fat, Head Chief, Blood Tribe is a keen hard-eyed vision of an Indian chief.

Museum visitors who are familiar with Cleveland's major works by landscape painters Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, and Frederic Church will have an opportunity to see Bierstadt's enormous Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California, measuring ten feet across, Cole's The Subsiding of the Waters of the Deluge, and one of Church's many majestic Arctic scenes, Aurora Borealis. Works by other important landscape artists, such as Asher Brown Durand, Thomas Moran and Samuel Colman, are also included.

Exceptionally well-represented in this exhibition are paintings by artists of the early modernist period in America. Ralston Crawford's Buffalo Grain Elevators is notable, along with Ivan Le Lorraine Albright's The Farmer's Kitchen, painted during the Depression under the sponsorship of a federal art program. Works by Edward Hopper, and by social realists Paul Cadmus and George Tooker are on view, as well as examples of post-war abstract expressionism, such as Franz

(more)

3-treasures from the national museum of american art

Kline's Merce C, named for experimental choreographer Merce Cunningham, and the multi-dimensional Reservoir by Robert Rauschenberg.

Sculptures in the exhibition include a classicized but highly naturalistic marble bust by Hiram Powers; a portrait of John Singer Sargent's sister Violet by the master of bronze relief, Augustus Saint-Gaudens; and the often-copied funerary sculpture by William Henry Rinehart, Sleeping Children.

A catalogue, with full-page color illustrations and documentation of each work in the exhibition, was produced with the support of United Technologies as a companion to the exhibition. It is available in the Museum Bookstore in hardcover for \$28.50 (\$24.50 for members) or softcover for \$19.50 (\$16.50 for members). Written by William Kloss, the 254-page volume includes a foreword by NMAA director Charles C. Eldredge, a history of the NMAA, and additional illustrated commentary on twenty-six artists whose works are significant in the NMAA collections.

Treasures opened at the Seattle Art Museum in February, and at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in May, 1986. From Cleveland, it will travel to the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth (November 7, 1986-January 4, 1987), the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (February 3-March 29, 1987), and return to the National Museum of American Art to be exhibited as an entity from May 8 through June 7, 1987.

The American Way in Sculpture 1890-1930, organized by Katherine Solender of the Cleveland Museum's Department of Education to complement Treasures, will be on view on the classroom level from August 12 through October 19. A press release about this exhibition is enclosed. Also enclosed is a full schedule of lectures, films, audio-visual programs, and gallery talks offered free of charge at the Museum throughout both exhibitions.

Admission and parking are free.

For additional information, color slides, or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.